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FOR ACTION

# ANALYSIS OF THE ELECTRONIC TRANSFER OF EXECUTIVE BOARD DOCUMENTATION

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1993/2 (1 (f)) (E/ICEF/1993/14) which requested the Executive Director to "undertake a technical and financial analysis of the electronic transfer of Executive Board documentation". Following a brief introduction and a description of the system employed by the United Nations Secretariat, the Executive Director recommends that (a) UNICEF should not develop its own facility for the electronic transfer of Executive Board documentation, but rather use the facilities developed at the United Nations Secretariat which are available to all United Nations organizations and agencies; and (b) Internet should be used for electronic mail communications.

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## Introduction

1. In an effort to further improve its procedures, the Executive Board adopted decision 1993/2 (1 (f)) which requested the Executive Director to "undertake a technical and financial analysis of the electronic transfer of Executive Board documentation, in consultation with the United Nations Documents Control, and bearing in mind comments made by delegates at the 1993 winter organizational session, and report back to the Executive Board as soon as this review has been completed and, in any event, not later than the 1994 winter organizational session".

2. The United Nations Committee on Conferences considered this subject at its 345th and 348th meetings on 17 and 18 May 1993 and "wished to draw the attention of the Executive Board to the fact that that decision [1993/2 (1 (f))] should be implemented taking into account the need to ensure the equal treatment of all official languages, pursuant to resolution 42/207 C, the need to comply with the six-week rule for availability of pre-session documentation and the need to ensure that the quality of conference services is not impaired" (A/48/32, chap. IV, para. 12).

## System employed by the United Nations Secretariat

3. The United Nations Office of Conference Services has developed an electronic system to track the preparation of official documents and store them electronically. The system was implemented in January 1993 and is now perfectly suited for the retrieval of Executive Board documentation by permanent missions in New York and Geneva, as well as agencies and all relevant United Nations organizations and their governing bodies.

4. All UNICEF Board documents, in all official languages, are stored in the United Nations system in either text format or image format, or both when documents contain charts and graphics. Each document is indexed before being stored, with full text indexing becoming available in 1994-1995. Access to documents stored in the system is controlled by applying different security codes. For UNICEF materials, a relatively low security code would allow permanent missions to access Board documents a short time prior to their final distribution. Documents can still be classified for restricted or general distribution.

5. The Office of Conference Services has prepared documentation and an installation check-list which may be requested by permanent missions in New York wishing to access the system. The package includes recommended technical specifications for the personal computer (PC) workstation, software packages required, ordering information for additional equipment and an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) order form to be sent to New York Telephone. (ISDN is a strategic business tool for the high volume transfer of information over telephone lines at a reduced cost.) The total cost of equipment, software and ISDN telephone line installation is estimated at approximately $7,000. Clearly, if the computer hardware is already in place, the cost will be reduced. The software for the PC is licensed for the use of the United Nations and

permanent missions only and does not cover United Nations agencies, which would be required to pay an additional $800. Currently 48 permanent missions have requested information on the system, of which approximately 20 will be connected early in 1994. Monthly charges for using the system would be based on a rate of $0.07 per minute billed by New York Telephone.

6. The system was designed with a view to providing services to all internal users of the Secretariat around the world. At present, however, the ability for external users to connect to the system and access official documentation electronically is limited to locations that provide ISDN service. The Office of Conference Services has been examining the implications of extending the service to countries that, at present, lack the technical capacity.

## Electronic mail service

7. Direct electronic messaging between UNICEF and Executive Board members and observers can be implemented immediately using an international network called Internet. Access to Internet, which can be obtained in most world capitals, will allow for unrestricted communications between different partners located at the United Nations, permanent missions, international organizations and agencies and their governing bodies.

## Recommendation

8. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board approve the following recommendation:

The Executive Board,

Having reviewed the report on the "Analysis of the electronic transfer of Executive Board documentation" (E/ICEF/1994/L.2),

1. Decides that UNICEF should not develop its own facility for the electronic transfer of Executive Board documentation, but rather use the facilities developed at the United Nations Secretariat which are available to all United Nations organizations and agencies;

2. Further decides that Internet should be used for electronic mail communications.

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